



Living in the good of
what we believe:
practical pointers from
James

Alan Cottenden, Christ Church Bedford, January 2021



Session 2:
Living wisely

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James: New life is for new living

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who

looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do.”
(James 1:22-25)



Aim of the series

... to encourage and equip us to live more and more in the good of what we believe, helping us along the path towards “second nature” in some important aspects of life.

Awkward
and alien



Novice



Second
nature

In his letter, James *earths* his exhortation to be “doers of the word” into his readers’ lives (us included!) on such topics as **living wisely**, **maturing through trouble** and **training the tongue**.



James on wisdom

- “If any of you lacks **wisdom**, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” (James 1:5)
- “Who is **wise** and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from **wisdom**” (James 3:13)
- “... the **wisdom** that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” (James 3:17)



What is “wisdom”?
How would you
define it?

Break out group chat #1



What is (biblical) wisdom?

- Wisdom is the possession of experience and knowledge together with the power of applying them critically or practically (OED)
- Wisdom is not primarily knowing the truth, although it certainly includes that; it is **skill in living**. For, what good is truth if we don't know how to live it?
(Peterson, *The Message*, intro' to James)
- Wisdom is increasingly knowing what Jesus would do and being able to do it. In all of life, not just the “spiritual” bits! Routine and “special”. (AC suggestion)



Where would you particularly like greater wisdom?
What might a wiser “you” look like?

Break out group chat #2



Living wisely

Some key pointers from Session 1:

- **Purpose & Perspective (a new P!)**: Why are we doing this? Motivation, incentive.
- **Partnership**: Not all down to God, nor all down to us.
- It's a **Process**: No quick fixes.
- **Perseverance**: It takes intention, time and effort.
- **Paeon**: (Thanksgiving for deliverance!). Grateful joy.



Purpose & Perspective

- “Find out what pleases the Lord” (Eph. 5:10).
- For God’s reward and “well done”.
(Colossians 3:24; Matthew 25:21)
- Puritan “living for an audience of one”. **Christmas nativity plays.**
- Practicing the presence of God: Bro’ Lawrence and LICC booklet.
- Searching for certainty & control. Fear of (visible) mistakes.
- Growing skills and growing conviction.
- The place of “stop me if I’m wrong” prayerful steps.
- *Faith* is spelled R-I-S-K. **Smart phones and computers.**



Partnership

- “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-30)
- “... let us keep in step with the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:25)
- “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” (2 Peter 1:3).
- God is there already! He’s the senior partner: our role is to assist him. What an adventure! **AC prayer for students.**



Process

- “...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6)
- Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)
- Prayer habits, arrow prayers, conversational prayers, bible reading.
- ‘Our lives are not problems to be solved but journeys to be taken with Jesus, our friend and finest guide’. (Henri Nouwen) **Are we there, yet?**



Perseverance

- Teach (Colossians 3:16) and encourage (1 Thessalonians 5:11) one another.
- "... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us..." (Hebrews 12:1)

AC brother obstacle race.

- Learn from others: how do you tackle prayer, read your bible, discern what God is saying to you? Encourage one another.
- Prayer diary. Prayer before sleep. Prayer prompts. Bible notes.
- Join a Home Group.
- Remember: it takes time to establish a new habit and it always feels very unnatural to begin with. Be faithful on action; gentle on results.



Paeon

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

"An attitude of gratitude, practised often enough, helps us find God in all things and can transform the way we look at our life and at other people. Psychologists have shown a direct link between our level of gratitude and our joy – a link long understood by the biblical writers."
(Bev Shepherd, LICC)



Pick one thing from this session you think might help you grow in wisdom?
How do you plan to use it?

Break out group chat #3